

**1) PARTIAL DEMOLITION AND ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING  
OUTBUILDING TO FORM HOME OFFICE/GYM, GARAGE/TRAILER  
STORE, AND STABLES/TACKROOM/FEED STORE**

**2) CHANGE OF USE OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO HORSE  
SCHOOLING ARENA**

**MELTHAM GRANGE FARM, SLAITHWAITE ROAD, MELTHAM HD9 5PT**

**PLANNING, DESIGN, AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

## **THE SITE**

The Meltham Grange Farm complex comprises a detached farmhouse with several ancillary outbuildings, set within approximately 4 acres of land. The site is located within the Green Belt, on the south side of Deer Hill End Road, approximately 1.5 km from the centre of Meltham. A public right of way/bridleway runs along the length of Deer Hill End Road.

The farmhouse building is of traditional stone construction with a pitched roof laid in stone flags and is set within a substantial domestic curtilage comprising mature formal gardens and a wooded area fronting onto Deer Hill End Road. The building is currently vacant and in need of substantial renovation, but essentially is in a sound structural condition. A prefabricated domestic garage stands in front of the farmhouse, together with a small greenhouse. Attached to the south west gable of the farmhouse are the remains of a former toilet/domestic storage area. Beyond the ruin there is a stone built agricultural building measuring approximately 50 square metres.

Linked to the south west corner of the farmhouse stands a two storey stone outbuilding, with a pole barn to the south. The north east and south west elevations of the building are largely intact as shown on the photographs below, with both end gables partially collapsed at first floor level. The roof of the building collapsed in recent years under heavy snow and was never replaced.

Adjacent to the outbuilding to the south west is a large agricultural building measuring approximately 500 square metres. The building, which was used as a cattle shed, has a substantial steel frame with elevations of block work and steel cladding. Two similar agricultural buildings are located approximately 60 metres to the west, with an open field to the rear.

Prior to the applicant acquiring the site in 2021 it was within the ownership of Yorkshire Water, who leased the land and the three agricultural buildings to Hinchcliffe's Farm. The farmhouse itself and the stone outbuilding were occupied for many years by an individual not employed in agriculture.



South west elevation of the stone outbuilding



North east elevation of the stone outbuilding

## **THE PROPOSAL**

This application relates to the two storey stone outbuilding and the adjacent cattle shed.

In terms of the outbuilding, it is proposed to partially demolish, repair and reroof the structure to create a single storey building providing a gym/home office, a garage/trailer store and two loose boxes with associated facilities, incidental to the existing dwelling. The submitted plans indicate that the building will be substantially reduced in height, but with the existing elevations and ground floor openings retained as far as possible. Any new areas of stonework will be constructed from stone reclaimed from the upper sections of the building. A replacement pitched roof will be constructed and laid in stone flags. The upper gables will be dark stained timber boarding.

It is also proposed to provide a horse riding/schooling arena within the existing large cattle shed. The building has a substantial steel frame and extensive block work walling and the proposed use will place no additional loads on the structure. However, the building has suffered some fire damage and some sections of metal cladding are beyond repair. It is proposed to repair or replace the damaged cladding and roofing sheets in order to both weatherproof the building and improve its visual appearance. The floor of the building currently slopes and will require levelling and resurfacing to provide an appropriate surface for horses.

## **PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 reformed the development planning system in England. Section 38(6) of the Act requires that all planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan, provided the policies or proposals it contains are relevant and unless 'material considerations' indicate otherwise.

The development must therefore be assessed against national planning policy contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG), together with the local planning policies as set out in the Kirklees Local Plan.

### **National Planning Policy**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) first came into effect in March 2012 and a revised version was published in July 2021. Paragraphs 10 and 11 of the revised NPPF set out that a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the Framework. Paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social, and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should endeavour to approve applications for sustainable development.

Section 13 – 'Protecting Green Belt land' is of particular relevance to this application and states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the

essential characteristics of Green Belt are their openness and their permanence. Development must not conflict with the main purposes of including land within the Green Belt, which are: -

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas
- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns and villages
- To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Paragraph 147 and 148 of the Framework states that 'inappropriate development' is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in 'very special circumstances'. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

### **The Local Development Plan**

The relevant local planning policy document is the Kirklees Local Plan, adopted in 2019, comprising the strategy and policies document, allocations and designations document and associated policies map. Section 19 of the Plan 'Green Belt and Open Space' is of particular relevance to this application.

In this policy context the main planning issues relevant to the proposal are:-

- Whether the development is appropriate in principle in the Green Belt
- Impact of the proposal on the purposes and openness of the Green Belt
- Design and visual amenity
- Access and parking

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### **The Principle of the Development**

Paragraph 149 states that local planning authorities should generally regard the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt as inappropriate. There are some exceptions to this restriction, including: -

*b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it*

*g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*

*– not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development*

The proposed equestrian facilities are appropriate for outdoor recreation purposes and, in principle, the proposal is considered to represent an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt under exception b).

Policy LP56 of the Local Plan 'Facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and cemeteries' states that in the Green Belt proposals for appropriate facilities associated with outdoor sport, outdoor recreation or cemeteries will normally be acceptable as long as the openness of the Green Belt is preserved and there is no conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Proposals should ensure that;

*a. the scale of the facility is no more than is reasonably required for the proper functioning of the enterprise or the use of the land to which it is associated;*

*b. the facility is unobtrusively located and designed so as not to introduce a prominent urban element into a countryside location, including the impact of any new or improved access and car parking areas;*

*c. in the case of all-weather riding arenas or other facilities for the exercising of horses, the degree of engineering operation required and the resultant re-grading of land, including any earth mounding and retaining structures, does not result in incongruous or discordant landform out of character with its setting that cannot be mitigated through the use of appropriate hard and soft landscape techniques.*

The proposed stables and arena will be for private domestic use by the applicant and other family members. The stables and associated land will provide a good standard of shelter, storage, and grazing for horses, in accordance with the standards and codes of practice set out by DEFRA and the British Horse Society. The loose boxes are of an appropriate size for the horses to be stabled and the proposed storage element of the building is essential to provide secure accommodation for the extensive range of equipment required for the stabling of horses and the general maintenance of the building and associated land. The types of equipment stored will include a trailer, feed and hay, straw bedding, tack, blankets, grooming equipment, wheelbarrows, food/water buckets, tools, and so on. The size and scale of the building are, therefore, considered appropriate for its proposed use. A manure stead is another obvious necessity and this will be located in close proximity to the stable building with good access to facilitate onward transportation of waste.

The riding arena will require the provision of a level surface. However, this will have no impact on the surrounding landscape being within the existing building and no additional external parking areas or access alterations are required.

In the light of the above, the principle of the development is considered appropriate under exception b) and Policy LP56.

Furthermore, guidance in paragraph 145 of the NPPF encourages local planning authorities to:-

*'... plan positively to enhance their (Green Belts) beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land'.*

The extract below from the Kirklees Definitive Map indicates that there are several bridleways (shown as a green line) in close proximity to the site, including a well used bridleway which runs along Deer Hill End Road. The provision of additional stabling in this location will encourage greater use of these recreational routes, thus providing excellent opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation in accordance with Paragraph 145.



**Extract from the Definitive Map showing bridleway links around the application site**

Local Plan Policy LP59 and exception g) of paragraph 149 relating to the redevelopment of brownfield sites in the Green Belt are also considered to be applicable to the proposed development. The stone outbuilding was originally constructed as a barn, but following the construction of the three agricultural sheds during the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was used as a workshop and for domestic storage by the tenant of the farmhouse who was not associated with agriculture. A statement by Hinchcliffe's Land Manager submitted with the application confirms that no agricultural usage of the building and yard area has taken place for at least 12 years during his employment and that the building was used for domestic purposes. This is further evidenced by the fact that an ethernet cable runs into the building and that numerous domestic items were discovered beneath the debris from the collapsed roof when the building was recently cleared. Examples of the items found can be seen on the photographs below and include motorcycle parts, weight training equipment, a lawnmower, plant pots, deck chairs and other garden paraphernalia. The detached garage in

front of the dwelling was erected shortly after the roof to the outbuilding collapsed and used as a replacement storage building for domestic items and the maintenance of motorcycles.

In these circumstances, it is evident that the stone barn and yard area constitute previously developed land and the proposed development is, therefore, appropriate in principle under exception g) and Policy LP59, providing that any impact on openness is considered acceptable.



**Ethernet cable in the outbuilding**



**Motor cycle parts found in the outbuilding**



**Various items of domestic paraphernalia found in the outbuilding**



**Lawnmower and weight training equipment found in the outbuilding**

### **Impact of the proposal on the purposes and openness of the Green Belt**

The proposal will not conflict with any of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt as set out above.

In terms of openness, it is considered that the proposal will have a lesser impact overall than the existing development. Much of the existing building will be retained, but the eaves height of the structure will be reduced by approximately 2 metres. Whilst the existing building currently has no roof, the height, bulk, and massing of its remaining elements has a greater impact on openness than the proposed single storey building.

It is also intended to remove the existing garage and greenhouse as shown on the photograph below, opening up the courtyard in front of the farmhouse, further reducing the overall impact on openness.

The proposed development will not extend beyond the footprint of the existing building and no additional hard standings, enclosures, or means of access are proposed. The siting of the building will also ensure that it does not appear as an isolated or obtrusive feature in the landscape. The building will be largely screened from the public realm by the existing dwelling, the agricultural building and mature trees around the site.

The creation of a riding arena within the existing agricultural building will have no impact on openness.



**Existing greenhouse and garage to be demolished**

### **Design and visual amenity**

Policy LP24 'Design' in the Local Plan states that:

*Proposals should promote good design by ensuring:*

*a. the form, scale, layout and details of all development respects and enhances the character of the townscape, heritage assets and landscape;*

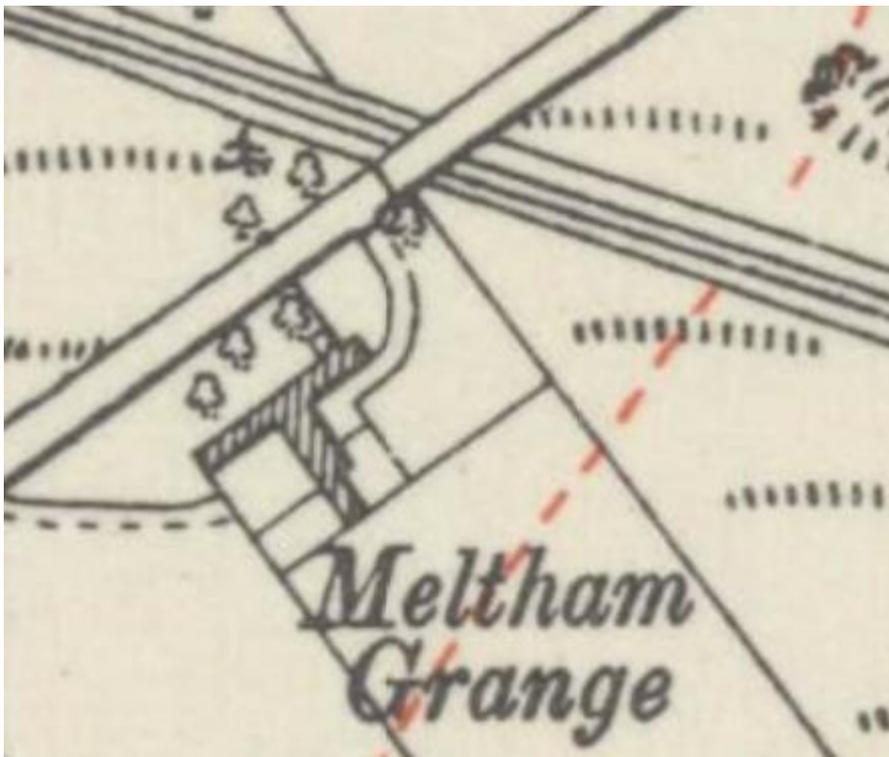
The proposed development will bring significant benefits in terms of visual amenity. The farm complex overall is in a poor state of repair following a lack of investment over many years. This proposal forms part of a wider scheme of future renovations and improvements to the property, including the farmhouse itself, which is currently vacant and becoming increasingly dilapidated. The dwelling will be fully renovated for occupation by the applicant and his extended family.

The stone outbuilding currently detracts from the visual amenities of the Green Belt, as do the pre fabricated garage and decrepit greenhouse situated in front of the principal elevation of the farmhouse. Sections of the fire damaged agricultural building are also unsightly. The proposed scheme will substantially improve the appearance of these structures and make good use of existing buildings.

The scheme has been designed to ensure that the building will appear as a traditional rural outbuilding to reflect both its Green Belt setting and the simple, robust design of the original building. Reclaimed stone

will be used to carry out localised repairs, with timber boarding introduced to the upper gables. Existing openings will be retained where possible. The replacement roof will be laid in stone flags to match the farmhouse.

The proposed development will enable the retention of much of the fabric of the existing building, together with the historic pattern of buildings on the site as shown on the map below dating from 1949. The layout of the buildings on the site has remained consistent from when the property was originally constructed in the early 1830s to the present day and is considered to form an important part of the character of the property, which although is not listed, has local historic significance. The farm was built and briefly resided in by William Leigh Brooks, who also built Meltham Hall, before his early death. William Leigh Brooks was a member of the family, who constructed virtually all of Meltham's civic buildings, which are now listed. These include Meltham Mills, Meltham Town Hall, the Jubilee Recreation Grounds, and St. James's Church.



**Meltham Grange Farm 1949**

### **Access and parking**

There are currently two vehicular access points into the site from Deer Hill End Road. No alterations are proposed to these existing arrangements. The submitted proposed site plan indicates that adequate parking and turning space can be provided within the existing domestic curtilage following the removal of the existing garage from the courtyard.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposal represents an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, preserving openness and without conflicting with any of the five purposes of the Green Belt. The scheme will bring about significant environmental benefits and, in accordance with national guidance, the proposed development will provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation in the Green Belt, particularly in view of its close proximity to the local bridleway network.

There will be no negative impacts in terms of residential amenity or highway safety.